

The Grange.

(from an article published in the *Totteridge Residents' Association Yearbook*)

The Grange, Totteridge, a Grade II listed building, has a long and distinguished history. It stands at the highest point of the terminal moraine of the last Ice Age that forms the ridge of Totteridge. According to the account of Diana Griffith (*The History of Totteridge*, 1992), The Grange is the earliest recorded residence in Totteridge and is mentioned in Chauncy's *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, published in 1700. The current building stands on the site of a hunting lodge allegedly used by Elizabeth Tudor. The property was acquired from Elizabeth I by Hugh Hare. The Hares (later the Lords Coleraine) lived there for some 80 years. The Lord Chief Justice, Sir Henry Montague, married John Hare's widow Margaret in 1620, and lived in the Grange. He was created Earl of Manchester and Lord High Treasurer by Charles I and famously wrote to the King apologising for missing a meeting of the Privy Council owing to the bad local roads. The present porch of The Grange houses a bust of Charles I.



According to a taxation document of 1663 The Grange was the largest house in Totteridge, listed with 27 hearths, but a map of Totteridge in 1895 shows that the grounds were relatively small and this may have been the result of Lord Coleraine serving Charles I during the Civil War and losing some of his estates as a consequence. The outhouses which included the stable block (now Grange House) and a gate house (now The Lodge) were built by Sir Charles Nicholson.

The Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Atkyns, lived at the Grange from 1672 until his death in 1709. The estate passed to the Lee family and the house was rebuilt by Sir William Lee's relative, John Fiott, in 1787. In 1794 the property was sold to Dr. William Garrow who had connections with the Thackeray family. In 1825 Mill Hill Junior School moved to The Grange and in 1875 it was bought by Sir Charles Nicholson from Frederick Wood.

The building burned down on the 22nd February 1899 and the family home was rebuilt by Charles, the architect son of the baronet, on the existing ground plan along lines similar to the eighteenth century design. A foundation stone near the front entrance records the event. The Nicholson's were a most talented family. Sir Charles trained as a doctor in Edinburgh and emigrated to his uncle's property in Australia where he became the Speaker in the New South Wales Assembly and was a founder and first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney. Sir Charles was a serious collector of Etruscan, Greek and Roman artefacts and founded a museum at the University. When the house burned down in the disastrous fire of 1899 most of the Nicholson's possessions were destroyed, but a valuable statue of Hermes, a gift to Sir Charles from Sir George Macleay, stood in the duck pond and thus escaped damage. This statue was given by Sir Charles's three sons to the University of Sydney in 1934 to mark the centenary of his arrival in Australia. Some interesting correspondence took place recently with Michael Turner, the current curator of the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney, and the Institute was able to supply some material for the Museum's Bicentenary exhibition.

Sir Charles's eldest son, Sir Charles Nicholson (the second baronet), was a distinguished architect, winning the Tite Prize in 1893 and was consulting architect to seven cathedrals. The second son, Sir Sydney Nicholson, was an organist and choir master appointed to Westminster Abbey in 1918 and founded the Royal School of Church Music in 1928. The third son, Archibald Nicholson, was a talented designer and producer of stained glass, including a memorial window for George Mallory, the Everest explorer.

Sir Charles Nicholson died in 1903 and was buried in the cemetery of St. Andrew's Church. His tomb is in the shade of the famous thousand-year-old Yew tree. In the early years of the twentieth century The Grange housed a girl's school but in December 1933 The Grange and its grounds were bought by Frank Parvin, an early property developer, who laid out Grange Avenue and converted the house into flats. The 1900 building has been modified at the northern end by the erection of a single storey extension and the construction of a balcony over the eastern wing, but other minor alterations are mostly internal to accommodate the current five somewhat unusual apartments in the building.